



STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION  
DIVISION OF MENTAL RETARDATION SERVICES  
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***Direct Learning for Direct Care  
Division of Mental Retardation Services Aligns with the College of Direct Support***

**Nashville** – The Tennessee Division of Mental Retardation Services (DMRS) is beginning a five-year agreement with the College of Direct Support (CDS) to provide online training for Direct Support Professionals (DSP), the frontline support for persons with mental retardation.

The CDS features a training curriculum designed to support a present day DSP workforce. Tennessee DSPs will have access to 150 facilities statewide.

“For some time DMRS has focused on taking the Direct Support Professional workforce in Tennessee to another level,” said DMRS Deputy Commissioner Stephen H. Norris. “The initiation of the College of Direct Support is the keystone of this campaign, and will be invaluable in enhancing our services and supports. As DSPs improve themselves the quality of life improves for the persons being served.”

The CDS is a unique collaboration between the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota; MC Strategies/Reed Elsevier, the world’s largest publishing company; the Administration on Developmental Disabilities; and the U.S. Department of Education. The CDS is now being fully or partially utilized in 22 states. The college has trained more than 70,000 learners and at any one time there are 40,000 active learners in the system.

(more)

“The CDS is both honored and proud to be working with DMRS in enhancing the skills and knowledge of Tennessee’s direct care workforce,” said Bill Tapp, CDS National Director. “The entire College of Direct Support partnership is pleased to be working with providers, families and consumers who are supported by DMRS. It is gratifying for us to provide the CDS in our home state and be a part of the support of a great Tennessee direct care workforce.”

The CDS curriculum, which includes 16 courses, is designed with the support of a National Board of Advisors as well as a National Board of Editors and each lesson is infused with values of respect, self-determination and ethical professional values. The curriculum is field tested and accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Another component of the CDS is the College of Frontline Supervision and Management. It has four courses and is used to train supervisors, lead workers and DSPs aspiring to supervisory positions.

“The curriculum, standards, and approach of the College of Direct Support are very impressive,” said Kim Dean, DMRS Director of Staff Development and Training. “Tennessee DSP’s will be exposed to a unique learning experience. DMRS is providing the opportunity for DSPs to take a large step forward and we encourage all to take advantage.”

DMRS is hosting three regional informational seminars on the CDS. The first will be Thursday, April 26<sup>th</sup> at the Tennessee School for the Blind in Nashville from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.; the second May 3<sup>rd</sup> in Jackson at the Holiday Inn, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.; and the third in East Tennessee on May 9th in Knoxville at the Cedar Bluff Holiday Inn, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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